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Community Label, Security, Education, Trust and Community Identity of Residents in Indemnificatory Housing Communities: Results of Survey Research in Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

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Abstract

On the basis of questionnaires, this article reports on a study of indemnificatory housing that analyzed residents' sense of security, sense of trust, children's education, community- label awareness and community identity. The results show that a substantial proportion of residents lack a sense of security, and believe that the community environment is not conducive to children's growth. Ordinal Regression results indicate that the community label sense could negatively affect community identity. Therefore, a multi-pronged approach to promote the sustainable development of the indemnificatory housing community has to be adopted.

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The Chinese Government is currently increasing the construction of indemnificatory housing to address the housing issue for low-income families, which presents a practical problem for the development of communities newly formed by the huge housing projects.

1. Literature review

The relevant literature can be organized as follows.

Most important is the public policy perspective. In large crowded cities, low-income families are often not able to afford the price of property. This problem cannot be solved through the regular housing market. So the government bears the responsibility. Comparing the policies in different regions, such as France's low-rent housing system (HLM), the public housing system in Hong Kong and Singapore's public housing policy, we could deduce that providing low-rent housing to the low-income groups should be a widely adopted solution.

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However, in this type of community, most residents are not familiar with each other at first, often leading to social conflicts, so analyzing the community culture is particularly important (Revill, 1993).

Another important aspect is the ecological perspective. Originating with the Chicago school of sociology, Parker and Burgess studied urban poverty space distribution using social ecology models such as their Concentric Zonemodell and Sectoral Model (Parker, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1967). These models linked biology "selection", the process of competition for space and resources, social dynamics, and sociology together to explain the formation process of the different sectors of living space in the city. More recent studies analyzed the living space and class differentiation from geospatial, bio-sociology and sociological perspectives (Puddifoot, 2006). Some Chinese scholars have studied the residence differentiation phenomenon of large and medium-sized cities in China, pointing out that class differentiation of living spaces has formed in China (Zhao, 2009).

Finally, the community capital perspective is important. Social capital is a classic analysis tool of community; according to Putnam and Coleman, social capital can be regarded as certain characteristics such as trust, norms and social support networks, operating through cooperative action to enhance the public interests of the community (Coleman, 1988). Similar theories address neighborhood effects and poverty traps, which focus on the relationship between community social capital and life opportunities of poor residents (Colombo & Senatore, 2004). Normally, residents in indemnificatory housing communities associated with low-income, are lacking in occupational opportunities, are without wide social interaction, and are short of social capital. So, a set of measures should be adopted to help the individuals out of this "poor trap" (Halpern, 1996).

All of the above provide a valuable approach for the understanding the development of indemnificatory housing communities from different perspectives. In fact, indemnificatory housing communities are not, in the traditional sense, naturally formed, but occur without self-contained neighborhood relations or a sense of community identity. So the traditional sociological tools of analyzing communities may not apply well to these kinds of communities. Therefore more systematic empirical analysis through use of survey research is needed.

Based on preliminary interviews, a questionnaire was developed to measure the awareness of the residents around five key areas, as follows. (1) Sense of security: law and order was identified as the factor of most concern factor by community residents. A feeling of safety and security is a indispensable factor influencing the community identity. (2) Sense of trust: trust is an important element of the social capital of community, which could be evaluated through the measurement of the degree of mutual trust of the residents in the community (Puddifoot, 1996). (3) Children's education: in China, especially in the big cities, place of residence is closely related to the schools available for children. The convenience and quality of education directly affect the quality of life of the community, and therefore determines, to some extent, the community identity. (4) Community Label: as a traditional aspect in the study of sociology, the place of residence may give residents a sense of social class distinction, which can influence community identity significantly. (5) Community Identity: this is an overall measure of community residents to the feelings of the community.

2. Data and analysis

The data were collected in 2010 and 2011. The survey was carried out by home visits to families using the questionnaire. The participants were permanent Guangdong residents aged over 18. The survey was administered to randomly selected individuals determined by the study team. More than 1000 valid samples were obtained. For the purpose of comparison, the study team chose relatively wealthier residents who inhabited indemnificatory housing communities as well as those living in commercial housing communities.

2.1 Descriptive tables

Table 1: Sense of security (Question: You feel safe in this community.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Highly disagree	51	9.5	9.6	9.6
	Disagree	96	17.9	18.0	27.6
	Moderate	149	27.9	28.0	55.5
	Agree	150	28.0	28.1	83.7
	Disagree	87	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	533	99.6	100.0	

Table 2: Sense of trust (Question: Most neighbours in this community can be trusted)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Highly disagree	22	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Disagree	32	6.0	6.0	10.2
	Moderate	113	21.1	21.2	31.4
	Agree	227	42.4	42.7	74.1
	Disagree	138	25.8	25.9	100.0
	Total	532	99.4	100.0	

Table 3: Children's Education (Question: This community is a good place for children's growth.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Highly disagree	89	16.6	16.8	16.8
	Disagree	96	17.9	18.1	34.8
	Moderate	141	26.4	26.6	61.4
	Agree	115	21.5	21.7	83.1
	Disagree	90	16.8	16.9	100.0
	Total	531	99.3	100.0	

Table 4: Community Label (Question: Do you think the community you live in represents your social class.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	160	29.9	29.9	29.9
	Not sure	262	49.0	49.0	78.9
	Yes	113	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	535	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Community Identity (Question: Your feeling about your community, generally.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not any Identity	37	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Little identity	107	20.0	20.0	26.9
	Not sure	222	41.5	41.5	68.4
	Some Extent of Identity	83	15.5	15.5	83.9
	Strong Identity	86	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	535	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen from the tables above, nearly 40 percent of the residents agree, to some extent, that they have a sense of security in regard to the life in the community. Nearly 70 percent of residents tend to agree that most neighbours within the community can be trusted. In contrast, more than half of the residents think that the communities in which they live are not the ideal place for children's growth. Only about 20 percent of the

residents have a strong sense of identity with the social status of the residents of the neighbourhood; almost half are not sure about that. In regard to a general sense of community identity, about 30% acknowledge a sense of identity, and about 30% deny it.

Some factors, such as labelling theory, based on abstract sociological theory, could not be directly used in the questionnaire. After some piloting, the research team simplified questions and the answers. Along with the results from the fieldwork, researchers found that, due to the relatively short time since the completion of the indemnificatory housing communities, most of the residents had just moved from a familiar environment to a relatively unfamiliar environment, contributing to that relatively weak identity. Most of the new indemnificatory housing communities are far away from the downtown, lack supporting institutions, particularly high-quality primary and secondary schools, which a fairly large proportion of parents think is detrimental to the education of the next generation.

2.2 Regression analysis

Table 6 Model fitting information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Intercept Only	1155.106			
Final	928.611	226.495	14	.000
Link function: Logit.				

In Table 6, the significant chi-square statistic indicates that the model gives a significant improvement over the baseline intercept-only model.

Table 7. Goodness-of-fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	975.474	750	.000
Deviance	721.601	750	.766
Link function: Logit.			

Table 7 shows the data and the model predictions are similar and that therefore is a good model.

Table 8. Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.348
Nagelkerke	.368
McFadden	.147
Link function: Logit.	


Cox and Snell's R^2  (Cox and Snell, 1989) is based on the log likelihood for the model compared to the log likelihood for a baseline model. The data in Table 8 shows it is a model with fairly good explanatory power.

Table 9 above gives the result of an Ordinal Regression analysis evaluating the importance of various predictor variables. The predictor variables include sense of security, sense of trust, education for children, and identify with social class (the label sense); dependent (target) variable is community identity. The results show that at the 0.01 level of significance, these factors, except sense of trust, are statistically influencing overall community identity. For factors, a factor level with a greater coefficient indicates a greater probability of being in one of the "higher" cumulative outcome categories. The sign of a coefficient for a factor level is dependent upon that factor level's effect relative to the reference category. These results shows that residents' greater sense of security, and a more recognized suitable community for education may enhance the sense of identity. Comparison of coefficients shows that education for children is the more powerful predictor of the community

identity. On the other hand, sense of trust doesn't seem to contribute to the model in a meaningful way and could probably be dropped without substantially worsening the model.

Furthermore, the sense of community label showed a significant negative correlation with community identity. This result suggests that if you perceive living in indemnificatory housing communities as linked to some kind of "stigma" label such as low-income, this may significantly weaken the social identity of the community residents. Those with more feeling of such labels are more likely to be in the lower identity categories.

Table 9. Parameter estimates

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
Threshold	[Community Identity = 1]	-3.502	.375	87.056	1	.000
	[Community Identity = 2]	-1.364	.347	15.412	1	.000
	[Community Identity = 3]	.956	.347	7.574	1	.006
	[Community Identity = 4]	2.029	.351	33.501	1	.000
Location	[Sense of security=1]	-.990	.334	8.760	1	.003
	[Sense of security=2]	-.849	.297	27.236	1	.000
	[Sense of security=3]	-.805	.260	9.600	1	.002
	[Sense of security=4]	-.621	.263	5.560	1	.018
	[Sense of security=5]	0a	.	.	0	.
	[sense of trust=1]	-.513	.464	1.226	1	.268
	[sense of trust=2]	-.707	.388	3.319	1	.068
	[sense of trust=3]	.305	.265	1.321	1	.250
	[sense of trust=4]	.320	.219	2.144	1	.143
	[sense of trust=5]	0a	.	.	0	.
	[children's education=1]	-1.762	.315	31.254	1	.000
	[children's education=2]	-1.558	.302	26.637	1	.000
	[children's education=3]	-1.308	.277	22.227	1	.000
	[children's education=4]	-1.092	.276	15.669	1	.000
	[children's education=5]	0a	.	.	0	.
	[Community Label=1]	2.743	.265	107.232	1	.000
	[Community Label=2]	1.745	.233	56.170	1	.000
	[Community Label=3]	0a	.	.	0	.

3. Conclusion and policy suggestion

The results of the data analysis found that nearly 30% of the residents of those interviewed have a negative evaluation of security, nearly 15% of residents lack a sense of trust, and 35% of the residents recognized that the community environment is not conducive to the growth of the next generation. Meanwhile, the residents' sense of community labels has a significant negative impact on community identity. The results show that the indemnificatory housing communities are still far from satisfactory.

In the field survey, the author found that most of the existing large-scale indemnificatory housing communities are far away from the center of the city, and without enough supporting facilities nearby, including health care, education, business and so on. In fact, most of communities are comfortably livable. It appears that with a larger number of indemnificatory housing being provided to low-income residents, the emergent problems are how to avoid social exclusion and social segmentation, and how to make indemnificatory housing communities residents enjoy more community resources and development space, and how to make education, health care and security more acceptable.

To solve these problems, some appropriate measures could be adopted, through community building, improving the social services and the environment of the community. Furthermore, based on the actual situation of community development, it is important to analyze positive and negative aspects of past community building experiences, and then carry out comparative studies of community development at home and abroad to explore an effective ways to enhance community identity and cohesion.

In addition, it is important to integrate and explore community resources to more effectively enhance community social capital, and to build harmonious communities through civil society organizations, social institutions, including social work services teams, non-governmental organizations, and charitable organizations.

Of course, addressing the different situations of low-income residents, and effectively combining the social security network, the network of market services, public service networks, and the social work support network is not an easy job.

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